



**Town of Arlington, Massachusetts**  
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## **School Committee Minutes 03-11-2003**

### **THE ARLINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY, MARCH 11, 2003**

**Present:** David McKenna, Chair                      Joani LaMachia  
Suzanne Owayda, Vice Chair                      Denis Sullivan  
Paul Schlichtman, Secretary                      Martin Thrope  
Barbara Goodman

**Superintendent:** Kathleen Donovan  
**Chief Financial Officer:** David Kale  
**Special Education Director:** Marilyn Bisbicos  
**Student Representative:** Sean Garballey

**Absent:** Joanne Gurry

**Call to order:** 7:35

#### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Heather Davis and Heather Therian spoke on behalf of the American Cancer Society's "Relay for Life" held June 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup>. They encouraged participation from AHS students and the community to promote general awareness of how the disease touches lives.

.. Amy Cohen voiced concerns over the proposal to eliminate the advanced track @ AHS, its implications for students and the difficulty coordinating the academic needs of a large group of students. She requested that schedules be done with the inclusion of the advanced level and to find the 4 teachers needed to keep the advanced level. Ms. Cohen also stated that 7-10 study halls per week leaves students with too many free hours and will look terrible on transcripts sent with college applications.

.. Deborah Kaden expressed concerns over no electives, the combining of college and advanced levels, and the fact that it will impact the majority of students. Ms. Kaden requested that if the a level has to be collapsed that the School Committee ensure that there is time to develop a reasonable curriculum to meet the needs of all students

.. Debbie Minns stated that she had grave concerns over the current Guidance Department. As a member of last year's guidance task force, she expected the creation of a new task force at the beginning of the school year to address and study the recommendations from the previous task force. She requested that any move toward an appointment for a permanent director of guidance be done thoroughly by appointing a committee made up of staff, parents, and administrators who will review and check references and conduct intensive interviews of all candidates. If it is determined that the department continue with an interim director that Elinor Molina be appointed since she is currently certified to do so and that the Committee table any move to extend the contract of Ted Dever, current interim director.

.. Nancy Barry APS parent and member of SPOT addressed the Committee relative to the concerns of the guidance department requesting that a future candidate possess a strong knowledge of guidance, college admissions, and a cooperative spirit.

#### **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Mr. Schlichtman reviewed correspondence. Mr. Schlichtman pointed out that e-mail correspondence sent individually to school committee members is not part of the official correspondence. Any person wishing correspondence to be included in the School Committee packet or acknowledged by the Committee should mail or e-mail the school committee secretary/office.

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Ms. Owayda it was unanimously Voted to approve the regular meeting minutes of January 28, 2003 as amended

Ms. Owayda spoke relative to correspondence received from parents concerned over the language on the new field trip release form. Ms. Owayda explained that the field trip policy and the release form was approved by the Policy & Procedure Subcommittee and then adopted by the full committee. Ms. Owayda consulted with John Maher, Town Counsel and together they will work on a cover letter explaining what the release means.

## **BUDGET**

### **Specialists Report**

Pasquale Tassone, Performing Arts, Marie Doughty & Lucille Gallagher, Nursing Supervisors, Rob DiLoreto, Athletic Director, Cindy Bouvier Health Coordinator, Kate Cremen-Basbas, Physical Education, Ted Dever, Guidance, Ed Rogers Counseling Services, Chuck Coughlin, Technology, Mary Villano Consumer Science reported out (statements attached) on the devastation the budget cuts would have on their programs stating that "Arlington has always considered the electives, the arts, athletics, guidance and nursing support services and library and media accessibility as basics in the total education of a child; eliminating these from our curriculum would produce graduates with incomplete educations".

School Committee members thanked and commended staff for their hard work and continued dedication. The Committee promised to advocate for an override, maximize every resource, review revenues not in the general fund, and scrutinize every penny in the budget.

## **Break**

## **ACCREDITATION REPORT**

Arlington High School principal Steve Woodcock reported out on the New England Accreditation of Schools and Colleges. In his report Mr. Woodcock explained that there are 7 standards in the summary report with each standard containing 6-8 recommendations and 6-8 commendations. Next steps include convening a follow up committee who will address the recommendations and evaluation, and establish a timetable for that work.

Mr. Woodcock will be notified by letter, mid-April as to the level of accreditation awarded to AHS. The four levels of accreditation are:

1<sup>st</sup> level - continued accreditation with a two year report

2<sup>nd</sup> level - continued accreditation with a two year report and special reports

3<sup>rd</sup> level - accreditation with a warning and a two year report

4<sup>th</sup> level – accreditation continues with a show cause for probation

Any highlighted recommendations that require immediate attention from APS must file a report back to NEASC within 90 to 120 days. Non-highlighted items that need to be addressed would be submitted with the two year report, every recommendation made within each standard must be addressed by the time the five year report is submitted.

The general consensus of the School Committee was that there were no real surprises and that there was a lot to be proud of in the report. Mr. Schlichtman stated that he was struck by the number of commendations received in the report but disturbed as to how many of those commendations are tied to the funding level we are currently at. In response to Mr. Schlichtman's inquiry as to what happens in the accreditations process if goals cannot be made due to budget constraints, Mr. Woodcock replied that we would still be responsible for creating a plan but that AHS must identify that there is a substantive negative change in the budget that prohibits making the recommended changes. Supt. Donovan will report out on the status of Mr. Woodcock's contract at the next meeting.

## **GUIDANCE UPDATE**

Supt. Donovan reported that a task force would be created to discuss the recommendations for the guidance department. The task force would be made up of two School Committee members, administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Members of the Committee questioned what the time frame would be, the make up of the task force and requested that a job description be ready for posting if in fact the task force recommends the continuation of a Director of Guidance. The Superintendent confirmed that recommendations from the previous task force along with recommendations from the NEASC would be addressed and that she expected the task force to report out at the end of April.

Ms. Owayda requested the resumes of the current guidance counselors and the interim director.

## **APPROVAL OF WARRANT**

Supt. Donovan requested approval of the warrant.

On a motion by Ms. LaMachia and seconded by Ms. Owayda it was unanimously Voted to approve warrant number 03120 in the amount of \$416,995.33.

Mr. Thrope stated that since it has been five months since our last financial report he requested a financial report at

the next meeting since the last one was presented in October.

### **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT**

“ **Budget** – Ms. LaMachia reported that the subcommittee discussed fees and the implications of raising fees or implementing new ones. John Maher met with the subcommittee to explain private fundraising in public schools. The issue was referred to the policy & procedures subcommittee who will create a draft policy on private fundraising.

“ Supt. Donovan gave an update and reviewed the latest budget figures.

“ The subcommittee discussed meeting as a full committee to discuss what would be acceptable for the school budget to present to the Board of Selectmen at their meeting on March 24<sup>th</sup>. At that meeting the Board of Selectmen will be discussing the override. Mr. McKenna pointed out that although the override is on their agenda it does not mean that the Board of Selectmen will be ready to take a vote at that meeting, that no one has a dollar figure and requested clarification for scheduling a special meeting before that date. Supt. Donovan stated that the SC could look more specifically at the budget before meeting with the Board of Selectmen to come with a bottom line for a presentation at that meeting and to give input to the Board of Selectmen as to whether the School Committee believes that there should be an override

Ms. Goodman pointed out that before the Board of Selectmen vote on a dollar amount the School Committee should present a tolerable school budget figure. Supt. Donovan stated that it is important for them to hear from us at some point.

Mr. Schlichtman pointed out that the Board of Selectmen could split the vote to place the override on the ballot and then vote on a dollar amount at a subsequent meeting.

On a motion by Ms. Goodman and seconded by Mr. Schlichtman it was unanimously  
Voted to move the 11:00 rule for 20minutes.

On a motion by Mr. Sullivan and seconded by Ms. Goodman, it was unanimously  
Voted to call a Special Meeting on March 20, 2003 at 7:30PM to discuss a school budget to be presented to the Board of Selectmen subject to the Board's agenda of March 24, 2003.

“ **Policy & Procedures: 1<sup>st</sup> reading policy KBBA** Ms. Owayda presented policy KBBA, Non-Custodial Parents Rights, KBBA-E, Notice To The Custodial Parent, & KBBA-R, Sample Affidavit for Non-Custodial Parent Requesting Student Records per General Laws Chapter 71, Section 34H to the Committee for a 1<sup>st</sup> reading. Ms. Owayda also reported that the Policy & Procedures Subcommittee is working on File ADDA: C.O.R. I. Requirements.

### **PTBC UPDATE**

Tabled until the next meeting.

### **ELECTION OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE OFFICERS/POLICY BDA**

Chair, Dave McKenna informed members that anyone interested in serving as chair or vice-chair must notify either himself or the school committee secretary. Mr. McKenna also stated that the most senior member of the committee would serve as chair of the organizational meeting. Mr. Thrope suggested that both he and Ms. Goodman alternate tasks at the organizational meeting since they are both the most senior members. Chair McKenna pointed out that since Ms. Goodman received the most votes at the first election she is the most senior member. On a point of order Mr. Schlichtman inquired who served as chair first Ms. Goodman or Mr. Thrope, Mr. Schlichtman stated since Ms. Goodman held the position of chair first then by definition she is the most senior member.

Mr. Thrope disagreed and made the motion that the chairing of the organizational meeting be divided by alternating tasks on the agenda by the two senior members of the committee. No second on the motion

### **NEW BUSINESS**

“ **Menotomy Preschool Summer Program** Supt. Donovan reported that MPS would like to offer a summer program as it did last summer and requests approval from the School Committee.

On a motion by Ms. Owayda and seconded by Mr. Thrope it was unanimously

Voted to approve the Menotomy Preschool Summer Program as recommended by Supt. Donovan.

“ Supt. Donovan informed the Committee that the Provisional Secretaries have petitioned the Labor Relations Commission requesting representation by the Arlington Education Association for the purpose of collective bargaining. Mrs. Donovan noted that the Governor's budget calls for the elimination of Civil Service (except for police & fire) and that would impact the negotiations we have with some of our help (custodial, maintenance & clerical).

“ The meeting time of Specialized Student Services Subcommittee Meeting of March 28 is changed from 6:00 pm to 5:00 pm

“ Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm.

Mr. Schlichtman noted that several Arlington community members on the e-list have invited Gov. Romney to visit Arlington; Mr. Schlichtman stated that since Arlington is suffering a 40% reduction in our chapter 70 aid that the School

Committee should extend a formal invitation to the Governor.

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Ms. Thrope it was unanimously

Voted to formally invite Governor Romney to visit Arlington, a community where 40% of the chapter 70 aid will be cut.

Mr. Schlichtman requested for the record that he acknowledges that Suzanne Owayda is the most senior member of the two of them by virtue of the fact that she received the most votes and the fact that Suzanne now holds the seat as vice-chair.

Mr. Thrope requested the following two items be referred to the curriculum, instruction and assessment subcommittee:

Mr. Thrope requested the curriculum & instruction subcommittee consider the following items:

To petition the DOE to allow students who meet local requirements to retake the MCAS as many times as necessary to pass the test. Supt. Donovan explained that current practice allows students to retake the test as many times as is necessary.

On a motion by Mr. Thrope and seconded by Ms. Goodman it was unanimously

Voted that the curriculum & instruction subcommittee set standards for a certificate of graduation to be awarded to those students who have met the local graduation requirements but lack a passing MCAS grade with details to be determined by the subcommittee.

On a motion by Mr. Goodman and seconded by Mr. Schlichtman

Voted to Move the 11:00 rule for an additional 10 minutes

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Mr. Sullivan it was

Voted to enter Executive Session for the purpose of legal and personnel issues with no further business to conduct upon return to open session except to adjourn. Roll Call: Unanimous

Executive Session from 11:20 to 11:40 PM

On a motion by Mr. Sullivan and seconded by Mr. Schlichtman it was unanimously

Voted to adjourn at 11:40 PM